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FOR G/TIP, EAP/MLS AND EAP/RSP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [CB](#)

SUBJECT: CAMBODIA: TIP ASSESSMENT VISIT

**¶11.** Summary: Representatives from G/TIP and EAP/RSP met with Cambodian government officials and NGOs on March 17 to gauge the Cambodian government's efforts to combat TIP.

Anti-trafficking NGOs unanimously agreed that the government has significantly increased its efforts and NGOs are receiving good cooperation from officials, although more remains to be done,. The MOI reported that it held a national seminar on law enforcement against trafficking, which brought together NGOs, government ministries, provincial police and governors, and international organizations to discuss strategies to improve cooperation and anti-trafficking efforts. MOI and MOJ reported increased arrests and prosecutions of traffickers. End Summary.

**¶12.** G/TIP program officer Sally Neumann and David Atkinson of EAP/RSP traveled to Cambodia March 17-18 to gauge the Cambodian government's efforts to combat TIP. The team met with multiple anti-trafficking NGOs, international organizations, and government ministries to assess the TIP situation.

The Government Perspective

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**¶13.** Prum Sokha, MOI Secretary of State, explained that political will and actions to combat TIP have steadily increased in the past year. Sokha cited the MOI's annual national seminar on law enforcement against sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking of women and children that was held on March 15. Minister of Interior Sar Kheng opened the event, which was attended by all government ministries, provincial governors, provincial police commissioners, and many international organizations and NGOs. Sokha noted that there has been a steady and significant increase in the numbers of trafficking victims rescued and perpetrators arrested over the past years. Sokha attributed this to increased police training and the implementation of the National Action Plan (which was created after Cambodia was given a Tier 3 ranking last year) that focused on five target provinces. Sokha noted that the National Action Plan will now expand to cover all 24 provinces and also to the district level. Sokha noted that cooperation between law enforcement agencies and NGOs has improved during the past year. He did express his concern, however, that some NGOs are overstepping their boundaries by conducting investigations, which Sokha believes should be done by law enforcement officials. Finally, Sokha explained that the recently-drafted trafficking law has been sent to the National Assembly and should provide clearer guidelines for government officials.

**¶14.** Minister of Women's Affairs Ing Kantha Phavi stated that her ministry continues to be heavily involved in combating trafficking. She stated that labor migration and TIP are

closely linked and she has requested that the government place labor attaches at its embassies so that migrant workers have assistance abroad should their rights be violated. Phavi noted that labor recruitment agencies should be more involved in educating workers of their rights and should conduct periodic inspections to ensure that workers are not being abused. Phavi remarked that Women's Affairs is deeply involved with prevention and awareness campaigns throughout the country, but that more needs to be done. She noted that these campaigns need to be focused not only on those vulnerable to trafficking, but on those who are responsible for prosecuting traffickers, i.e., judges and police. Phavi also noted that the government is heavily dependent on NGOs for providing shelters to victims and she is concerned about their security. Finally, Phavi said that without an improved economy and increased job opportunities, many victims will become re-trafficked.

¶5. Ministry of Justice Secretary of State, Neou Kassie, explained that the Cambodian government's will to combat trafficking is strong and that there has been an increase in convictions of traffickers over the past year. Kassie remarked that the government is currently pursuing the extradition of an Australian pedophile who escaped to Australia. He said that it appears that the Australian government is willing to cooperate and that the MOJ will secure a conviction. Kassie noted that the MOJ is currently cooperating with the Department of Homeland Security to prosecute an accused AmCit pedophile in the U.S. Kassie remarked that the will to combat TIP goes to the highest levels of the government, citing a recent directive by Prime Minister Hun Sen, which instructed the judiciary to issue strong sentences for convicted traffickers. Nonetheless, Kassie mentioned that there are inter-ministerial turf battles, such as a recent memo sent out by National Police

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Commissioner Hok Lundy that stated that judicial police would remain under his authority, even though according to Kassie, they should be under MOJ authority. Kassie also mentioned that progress has been made on corruption, as evidenced by the recent arrest of a police officer who accepted a bribe from a suspected Korean pedophile.

¶6. G/TIP program officer informed Kassie that \$200,000 of program money has been set aside to fund a judicial training program on TIP. Kassie noted that very little has been done in this sector and that the funding would be very useful to everyone involved in the judiciary. He remarked that the new trafficking law should be approved by the National Assembly soon and that the timing for this training would be optimal.

#### NGOS: THE GOVERNMENT IS IMPROVING

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¶7. Anti-trafficking NGOs universally noted that cooperation with the government is good and that they are seeing a greater will by the government to combat trafficking. NGO AFESIP co-founder Mam Somaly said that she recently met with National Police Commissioner Hok Lundy to discuss TIP-related cooperation. Somaly stated that AFESIP had some difficulties getting police action in the past, but now she speaks directly to Lundy regarding complaints and that cooperation with the police is good. Lundy provided Somaly with the Deputy Police Commissioner's direct phone number so that she could report any difficulties with inaction on the part of the police. Somaly noted that AFESIP has very good cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and that the Ministry of Justice is continually improving. AFESIP continues to receive victim referrals from government officials.

¶8. NGO Hagar reported that the anti-trafficking environment has greatly improved because there is now the political will necessary to take significant action. Hagar has seen an

increased success rate on its court cases and an overall improvement in the legal environment. He noted that TIP is part of a greater gender-based violence problem in Cambodia and that there has been an inordinate amount of attention given to trafficking for sexual exploitation, when domestic violence and sexual assault are much bigger problems. Hagar noted that there is a strong need to train judges, as they are not very sensitive to the needs of children.

¶9. NGO World Vision reported that there has been a steady improvement in the government's efforts to combat trafficking; however, the government still needs to be monitored. World Vision noted that it has seen a significant improvement in cooperation with high-level officials when cases are not receiving action from local officials. World Vision explained that its relationship with the anti-trafficking police and Phnom Penh police continues to be very good.

¶10. MOI law enforcement advisor Christian Guth and NGO International Justice Mission (IJM) Director Kaign Christy reported a steady increase in government cooperation and action, despite an initial slow-down following the Chhay Hour II/AFESIP incident. According to Guth and Christy, arrests and rescues have increased significantly during the past year and the government's will to combat trafficking has strengthened. Both men remarked that there is much work to be done, but they believe that the government is committed to fighting TIP.

¶11. During a briefing on labor trafficking, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) informed that trafficking for labor exploitation is a serious problem in Cambodia, although it does not receive the attention that trafficking for sexual exploitation does. Both organizations reported that the Ministry of Labor is committed to fighting trafficking, but it lacks the capacity to do so. According to these organizations, there are 180,000 registered Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand, but the number of irregular workers is unknown. They reported that one of the most significant problems for trafficked Cambodian workers is Thailand's failure to recognize them as victims, but as illegal migrants.

Comment

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¶12. The Cambodian government has made good progress over the past year in addressing trafficking in persons issues on a variety of fronts: prevention programs, law enforcement actions, and judicial prosecutions. The Prime Minister and senior MOI officials have been reinforcing the message that the RGC takes this issue seriously and is committed to reducing TIP in Cambodia. NGOs are unanimous that cooperation with the government has improved. Post welcomes the proposed judicial training program, which will complement some of our other rule of law programs. End comment.

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